FOUR DAYS

HETTY HEMENWAY

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"If you hear I'm missing, there is still a good chance."

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THE STORY OF A WAR MARRIAGE

BY

HETTY HEMENWAY

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY
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FOUR DAYS

I

With savage pity Marjorie regarded a sobbing girl whose face was distorted, and whose palsied hands were trying to straighten her veil and push back stray wisps of hair. Marjorie thought: "What a fool she is to cry like that! Her nose is red; she's a sight. I can control *myself*. I can control myself."

An elderly man with an austere face, standing beside Marjorie, started to light a cigarette. His hands trembled violently and the match flickered and went out.

Marjorie's heart was beating so fast that it made her feel sick.

A locomotive shrieked, adding its voice to the roar of traffic at Victoria Station. There came the pounding hiss of escaping steam. The crowd pressed close to the rails and peered down the foggy platform. A train had stopped, and the engine was panting close to the gate-rail. A few men in khaki were alighting from compartments. In a

moment there was a stamping of many feet, and above the roar and confusion in the station rose the eager voices of multitudes of boys talking, shouting, calling to each other.

Marjorie saw Leonard before he saw her. He was walking with three men — joking, laughing absent-mindedly, while his eyes searched for a face in the crowd. She waited a moment, hidden, suffocated with anticipation, her heart turning over and over, until he said a nonchalant good-bye to his companions, who were pounced upon by eager relatives. Then she crept up behind and put both her hands about his wrist.

"Hello, Len."

Joy leaped to his eyes.

"Marjie!"

Impossible to say another word. For seconds they became one of the speechless couples, standing dumbly in the great dingy station, unnoticed and unnoticing.

"Where's the carriage?" said Leonard, looking blindly about him.

"Outside, of course, Len."

A crooked man in black livery, with a cockade in his hat, who had been standing reverently in the background, waddled forward, touching his hat.

"Well, Burns, how are you? Glad to see you."

"Very well, sir, and thank you, sir. 'Appy, most 'appy to see you back, sir. Pardon, sir, this way." His old face twitched and his eyes devoured the young lieutenant.

A footman was standing at the horses' heads, but the big bays, champing their bits, and scattering foam, crouched away from the tall young soldier when he put out a careless, intimate hand and patted their snorting noses. He swaggered a little, for all of a sudden he longed to put his head on their arching necks and cry.

"You've got the old pair out; I thought they had gone to grass," he said in his most matter-of-fact tone to the pink-faced footman, who was hardly more than a child.

"Well, sir, the others were taken by the Government. Madam gave them all away except Starlight and Ginger Girl. There is only me and Burns and another boy under military age in the stables now, sir."

Inside the carriage Leonard and Marjorie were suddenly overawed by a strange, delicious shyness. They looked at each other gravely, like two children at a party, dumb, exquisitely thrilled. It was ten

months ago that they had said a half-tearful, half-laughing good-bye to each other on the windy, sunny pier at Hoboken. They had been in love two months, and engaged two weeks. Leonard was sailing for England to keep a rowing engagement, but he was to return to America in a month. They were to have an early autumn wedding. Marjorie chose her wedding-dress and was busy with her trousseau. She had invited her bridesmaids. It was to be a brilliant, conventional affair — flowers, music, countless young people dancing under festoons and colored lights. In August the war broke out. Leonard had been in training and at the front from the first. Marjorie crossed the precarious ocean, to be in England for his first leave. It was now May: they were to be married at last.

"Marjie."

"Len."

"I have just four days, you know, darling. That's all I could get. We've been transferred to the Dardanelles: else I wouldn't have got off at all."

"Four days," murmured Marjorie. She looked up, and met his eyes, and stared, and could not look away. "It's a long, long

time, four days," she said, without knowing what she was saying. All at once she put her hands over her eyes, and, pressing her head fiercely against Leonard's arm, she began to cry and to laugh, continuing to repeat, senselessly, "It's a long, long time."

And Leonard, trembling all over, kissed her on the back of her head, which was all he could reach.

They drew near to Richmond, the familiar avenues and the cool, trim lawn, and the great trees. Marjorie's tongue all at once loosened; she chattered whimsically, like an excited child.

"It's home, home, home, and they're all waiting for us — mater and your father and all the family. He's been in a perfect state all day, poor old dear, though he hasn't an idea any one's noticed it. Little Herbert's the only one that's behaved a bit natural — and old Nannie. I've been rushing about your room, sitting in all the chairs, and saying, 'To-night he'll be sitting in this chair; to-night he may be standing in this very spot before the fire; to-night he may be looking out of this window.' O, Len, we're to be married at half-past eight, and

we're going in motors so as not to waste any time. I haven't even read over the marriage service. I haven't the vaguest idea what to do or say. But what difference does that make! Do you see, Len? Do you see?" She stopped and squeezed Leonard's hand, for she saw that he was suddenly speechless. "There they are," lifting the blind, "mother and little Herbert: and see the servants peeking from the wing."

They swept grandly around the bend in the avenue. The windows of the great house blazed a welcome. All the sky was mother-of-pearl and tender. In the air was the tang of spring. In the white light Marjorie saw Leonard's lips quiver and he frowned. She had a sudden twinge of jealousy, swallowed up by an immense tenderness.

"There's mother," he said.

"Hello, Len, old boy."

His father was on the steps. Leonard greeted him with the restraint and the jocose matter-of-factness that exist between men who love each other. He kissed his mother a little hungrily, just as he had when he was a small boy back from his first homesick term at Eton, and fluttered the heart of that frail, austere lady, who had borne this big.

strapping boy — a feat of which she was sedately but passionately proud.

Little Herbert, all clumsiness and fat legs and arms, did a good deal of hugging and squealing, and Miss Shake, Leonard's old governess, wept discreetly and worshipfully in the background.

"Look at 'im! Ain't he grand? Glory be to God — bless 'im, my baby!" cried Irish Nannie, who had suckled this soldier of England; and loudly she wept, her pride and her joy unrebuked and unashamed.

At the risk of annoying Leonard, they must follow him about, waiting upon him at tea-time, touching him wistfully, wonderingly, for was it not himself, their own Leonard, who had come back to them for a few days? And instead of himself, it might have been just a name, — Leonard Leeds, — one among a list of hundreds of others; and written opposite each name one of the three words, *Wounded*, *Missing*, *Dead*.

Jealously his own family drew aside and let Marjorie go upstairs with him alone. She had the first right; she was his bride. Mr. Leeds plucked little Herbert back by his sailor collar and put his arm through his wife's. Together they watched the two

slender figures ascending the broad staircase. Each parent was thinking, "He's hers now, and they're young. We mustn't be selfish, they have such a short time to be happy in, poor dears."

"Looks fit, doesn't he?" said the father, cheerfully, patting his wife's arm. *Inwardly* he was thinking, "*How* fortunate no woman can appreciate all that boy has been through!"

"Do you think so? I thought he looked terribly thin," she answered, absently. To herself she was saying, "No one — not even his father — will ever know what that boy has seen and suffered."

Little Herbert, watching with big eyes, suddenly wriggled his hand from his father's grasp.

"Wait, Leonard, wait for me! I am coming!"

Upstairs old Nannie was officiating. She was struggling with Leonard's kit, which resembled, she thought, more the rummage box of a gypsy peddler than the luggage of a gentleman.

The young officer had taken off his great-coat and was standing with his back to the hearth. He loomed up very big in the

demure room, a slender, boyish figure, still too slim for his shoulder-width and height, clad in a ragged uniform, a pistol bulging from one hip at his belt. He looked about him at the bright hangings, with a wandering gaze that reverted to a spot of sunlight on Marjorie's hair and rested there.

"I'm all spinning round," he said with a puzzled smile, "like a dream."

He continued to stare with dazed, smiling eyes on the sunbeam. His hair was cropped close like a convict's, which accentuated the leanness of his face and the taut, rigid lines about his mouth. Under his discolored uniform, the body was spare almost to the point of emaciation. Through a rent in his coat, a ragged shirt revealed the bare skin. He looked at it ruefully, still smiling. "I'm rather a mess, I expect," he said. "Tried to fix up in the train, but I was too far gone in dirt to succeed much."

Marjorie, with the instinct of a kitten that comforts its master, went up to him and rubbed her head against the torn arm.

"Don't," he said, hoarsely; "I'm too dirty." He put out a hand, and softly touched her dress. "Is it pink?" he asked,

"or does it only look so in this light? It feels awfully downy and nice."

She noticed that two of his nails were crushed and discolored, and the half of one was torn away. She bent down and kissed it, to hide the tears which were choking her. She felt his eyes on her, and she knew that look which made her whole being ache with tenderness — that numb, dazed look. She had seen it before in the eyes of very young soldiers home on their first leave — mute young eyes that contained the unutterable secrets of the battlefield, but revealed none. She had seen them since she came to England, sitting with their elders, gray-haired fathers who talked war, war, war, while the young tongues — once so easily braggart — remained speechless.

What had they seen, these silent youngsters — sensitive, joyous children, whom the present day had nurtured so cleanly and so tenderly? Their bringing-up had been the complex result of so much enlightened effort. War, pestilence, famine, slaughter, were only names in a history book to them. They thought hardship was sport. A blithe summer month had plunged them into the most terrible war of the scarred old earth.

The battlefields where they had mustered, stunned, but tingling with vigor and eagerness, were becoming the vast cemeteries of their generation. The field where lay the young dead was their place in the sun. The still hospital where lay the maimed was their part in a civilization whose sincerity they had trusted as little children trust in the perfection of their parents.

Beside the army of maimed and fallen boys was another shadowy army of girls in their teens and sweet early twenties — the unclaimed contemporaries of a buried generation.

There was a fumbling at the door-handle and a small, muffled voice came from the corridor: —

"I say, Len; I say, Marjorie, can I come in?" And in he walked, spotless and engaging, in a white sailor suit with baggy long trousers, his hair still wet from being tortured into corkscrew curls. "I'm all dressed for the party," he announced; "I'm not going to bed at all to-night."

Marjorie tried to draw him into her lap, but he eluded her with a resentful wiggle, and walking up to Leonard, whacked him on the thigh and looked up with a sly,

beseeching glance which said, "Whack me back. You play with me. You notice me. I love you."

His eyes were on a level with Leonard's pistol; he put his little pink face close to it lovingly, but drew back again, puckering up his small nose.

"Oh, Leonard, you smell just like a poor man!" he exclaimed.

Leonard grinned. "You never got as near as this to any poor man who is half as dirty as I am, old dear."

"You've got just half an hour to dress for dinner, and we're due in the church at eight," said Marjorie.

She paused in the doorway, a slim figure in a crumpled white dress.

Leonard stared at her blankly, and then put out a bony arm and drew her to his side.

"It's awfully tough on you, honey, to have it this way; no new clothes or anything fixed up, and," he added, smiling and closing his eyes, "coming away across the ocean full of dirty little submarines to a bridegroom smelling like a poor man! Jove! I want a bath!"

"Just as I was about to take the liberty of remarking myself," old Nannie said. She

was standing in the doorway, her arms akimbo and her sleeves rolled up. "Captain Leeds, it's all ready."

Leonard's arms were still about Marjorie. "Captain Leeds, otherwise known as Lieutenant Leeds," he said, "once known as Leonard, presents his compliments to Mrs. Bridget O'Garrity, née Flannagan, and wishes her to request Mr. Jakes, in the culinary regions, to draw his bath and lay out his things and generally make himself a nuisance. He will not permit Mrs. O'Garrity to dress him."

"Oh, now, Captain Leeds — well then, Leonard dearie, you bad boy," wailed the old woman reproachfully. "Mr. Jakes has gone to the war, as has likewise all the men in the house, and a good riddance it is, too. There was a time when you weren't too grand to let your poor old Nannie wait on you. Why, Miss Marjorie, I remember the time when he couldn't —"

"No reminiscences!" broke in Leonard, eyeing Nannie suspiciously. "You have had so much experience with men you ought to know how they hate it. Why, Marjorie, do you realize that Nannie has had five husbands?"

"Oh, Master Leonard, indade, it is only three!" cried Nannie, horrified.

"Seven," Leonard insisted; "it's a compliment. It only shows how fascinating you are with the polygamous sex. It was seven, only two never showed up after the wedding. I was to be the eighth, Marjie, only you came in between us."

"Master Leonard, I could smack you for talking like that! Don't listen to 'im, Miss Marjorie."

"Cheer up, old Nannie," continued Leonard; "there's still Kitchener. He's a bachelor and a woman-hater, but then, he's never met you, and he's even a greater hero than I am."

Nannie, aghast but delighted, advanced toward Leonard, shaking her gray curls. "H'm, h'm. Woman-haters, you say. I never met one, indade." Then, very coaxingly, "Didn't you bring your old Nannie a souvenir from the war?"

"Rather," said Leonard, indicating with his chin the rent on his shoulder. "How about this?"

"How about that!" said Nannie, her old eyes in their deep furrows gleaming with malice.

From behind her broad back she drew forth a round metal object that flashed in the firelight.

"It's a German helmet!" cried Marjorie.

"I want it!" shouted Herbert, stretching up his arms for the flashing plaything.

"It's mine," coaxed Marjorie, trying to wrest it from Nannie.

Leonard put out a swift hand, and held it aloft by the spike.

"Let me try it on," wheedled Marjorie, coaxing down his arm.

"You look like a baby Valkyrie," said Leonard, placing the helmet on her head; but he frowned.

Marjorie regarded herself in the mirror.

"This belonged to an officer of the Prussian guard," she said.

"It did. How did you know?"

Marjorie continued to stare at herself in the mirror as if she saw something there behind her own reflection. "The very first man who was ever in love with me wore a helmet like this," she said, suddenly, lifting enigmatic and mischievous eyes to Leonard.

"How many have there been since?" Leonard smiled, lazily.

"I can remember only the first and the last," said Marjorie.

Leonard laughed, but he could not see Marjorie's face. She was standing looking down at the gold eagle-crest, holding the helmet in both hands, carefully, timidly, as if it were a loaded weapon that might go off.

"Where did you get it, Len?" she asked, gravely.

"There's a crop of them coming up in France this summer," said Leonard.

"But seriously, Len?"

"Seriously, Marjorie." He took the helmet by the spike and put it on the mantel. "Lord knows, I'm not presenting that as a token of valor to any one. It belonged to a poor chap who died on the field the night I was wounded. My orderly packed it in my kit."

Marjorie drew a deep breath. "Oh, Len," she whispered, staring at the helmet. "How does it feel to kill a man?"

Leonard, smiling, shifted his position and answered. "No different from killing your first rabbit, if you don't sit down on the bank and watch it kick, and write poetry. Besides, you always have the pleasure of thinking it's a German rabbit."

"Oh, Len!"

"You're just one in a great big machine called England. It isn't your job to think," Leonard said. "For God's sake, lamb, don't cherish any fool Yankee pacifist notions. We are going to beat the Germans till every man Fritz of them is either dead or can't crawl off the field." His black fingers closed over Marjorie's. "Remember, after to-night you're an Englishwoman. You can't be a little American mongrel any more; not until I'm dead, anyway. Now I've got you, I'll never let you go!" He showed his teeth in a fierce, defiant smile, in which there was pathos. He knew what a life in the Dardanelles was worth. He put his cropped head close to Marjorie's. "Do you hate me for that, Marjie?"

Marjorie, pressing against him, felt the strength of his gaunt shoulder through his coat. A sense of delicious fear stole over her, and the savage which lies close to the surface in every woman leaped within her.

"I love you for it!" she cried.

"Don't rub your head against my coat," murmured Leonard; "there's bugs in it."

They both laughed excitedly.

II

Two hours later the wedding took place in the church where Leonard had been baptized and confirmed. Little Herbert thought he had never been to such a strange party. He didn't care if he never went to one again. No one was dressed up but himself. His mother and father and Marjorie wore their every-day clothes, but their faces were different. He wouldn't have believed it was a party at all, except for their faces, which were an expression he associated with Christmas and birthdays.

The church was dark, and it seemed to Herbert so vast and strange at this late hour. Candles gleamed on the altar, at the end of a long, shadowy aisle. Their footsteps made no sound on the velvet carpet as they walked under the dim arches to the front seat. His aunts and his uncles and his brother's big friends from the training camp seemed suddenly to appear out of the shadows and silently fill the front rows. In the queer light

he kept recognizing familiar faces that smiled and nodded at him in the dimness. Even Miss Shake and Nannie looked queer in the pew behind. Nannie was dressed in her "day-off" clothes. She was crying. Herbert looked about him wonderingly: yes, Miss Shake was crying, too — and that lady in the black veil over there: oh, how she was crying! No; he didn't like this party.

Through a little space between his father's arm and a stone pillar he could see Leonard's back. Leonard was standing on the white stone steps, very straight. Then he kneeled down, and Herbert heard his sword click on the stone floor. The minister, dressed in a white and purple robe, with one arm outstretched, was talking to him in a sing-song voice. Herbert couldn't see Marjorie, the pillar was in the way; but he felt that she was there. Leonard's voice sounded frightened and muffled, not a bit like himself, but he heard Marjorie's voice just as plain as anything —

"Till death us do part."

Presently the choir began to sing, and his mother found the place in the hymn-book. Herbert couldn't read, but he knew the hymn. Each verse ended, —

"Rejoice, rejoice,
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing."

Herbert looked on the hymn-book and pretended he was reading. The book trembled. Leonard and Marjorie were passing close to the pew. They looked, oh, so pleased! Leonard smiled at his mother, and she smiled back. She lifted Herbert up on the seat and he watched them pass down the dark aisle together and out through the shadowy doorway at the very end. The little boy felt a vague sensation of distress. He looked up at his mother and the distress grew. She was still singing, but her mouth kept getting queerer and queerer as she came to the line, —

"— give thanks, and sing."

He had never seen his mother cry before. He didn't suppose she could cry. She was grown up. You don't expect grown-up people, like your mother, to cry — except, of course, Nannie and Miss Shake.

"Rejoice, rejoice,
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing."

He sang it for her. The voices of the choir seemed suddenly to have traveled a long way off and the tones of the organ were

hushed. He heard his own voice echoing in the silent church. The words seemed to come out all wrong. He felt a terrible sense of oppression in the region of his stomach, and he wondered if he were going to be ill. It was a relief to hear himself crying at the top of his lungs, and to have Nannie scolding him lovingly, and leading him out of the church. He drove home, sniffing but comforted, in his father's lap.

"He felt it," old Nannie said to Burns, as she lifted him out of the carriage. "The child understood, bless him!"

"There wasn't a dry eye come out 'f the church," said Burns, "except them two selves."

"I wonder where they've gone?" said Nannie, eyeing Burns jealously. "They must have took a train, I suppose?"

"That's telling," said the old man, whipping up the horses that were covered with foam.

III

Four days is a long, long time, Marjorie had said, for the hours that are breathlessly counted make long, long days; they are long as those of summer-childhood in passing. But ever, when it comes May, and the soft, chill breezes blow from the ocean across the sun-soaked sands, and the clouds run dazzling races with the sea gulls, Marjorie will feel herself running too, catching up breathless a few paces behind Leonard, as on that second afternoon on a wind-swept beach of the Kentish coast. Like mad things, their heads thrown back, hair flying, mouths open, the spray smiting their open eyes, with all the ecstasy of their new-found energy, they clambered over the slippery seaweed and leaped from rock to rock, swept along with the winds, daring the waves, shouting down the surf.

Marjorie, when those spring days come round again, will remember a little cove, sheltered from the wind, warmed by the fitful spring sunlight, where, panting, they

threw themselves down on the sand, bodies glowing, faces to the sun.

"Hello, sun!" cried Marjorie.

"Hello, clouds!" cried Leonard.

"Hello, old sea gulls!" cried Marjorie, beginning to sneeze.

"God, but I feel fit; I feel glorious! Don't you, Marjie?"

"Don't I, though! I feel glorious. O God!" cried Marjorie, who did not know whether that was swearing or praying, and did not care.

Leonard ran his hands through the chill, warm sand, and watched a huge black spider promenading with bustling importance up his arm.

"The female spider eats the male as soon as he fertilizes the eggs, but he has to just the same," said Leonard, dreamily.

"Let's kill her," said Marjorie.

"No."

"Yes."

"Why?"

"She's a cannibal," said Marjorie.

"No, it's her instinct," said Leonard.

He opened an alleyway for the spider in the sand, and, with his head down close, watched it hustling away. "It's the same

with us; we know we have every chance of being killed in this war, and we have to go, and we're glad to. It's not courage or sacrifice; it's instinct."

"You think so, Leonard?"

"It's not nice to lie alongside of a man you've killed and watch him die," said Leonard, inconsistently, eyes looking down into the sand, head pillowed on his arm.

"Did you have to, Len?"

"I didn't exactly mean to kill him. He was wounded," murmured Leonard, raising little white pools in the sand with his nostrils. "We had a rotten day and had taken a small position which didn't amount to anything when we got it. *Wasn't I in a nasty sulk!* Some of my green men had funked just at the crucial moment, and I had all but shot one. The ground was covered with wounded. Couldn't tell theirs from ours. Awful mess. I was coming back across the field over dead bodies, and cursing every one I stumbled across. I suppose I felt pretty sick. I saw a helmet gleaming in some burnt shrubbery. It was a nice shiny one, with an eagle crest. It occurred to me you'd written me to send you one, 'because all the girls had them'—remember?"

Leonard rolled over close beside her and his head went down into the sand again.

"I went to pick it up, but it seems I got something else with it. A great blonde fellow in gray, all powdered with dust and bleeding, — Jove! how he was bleeding! — came up with it. It surprised me and he managed to knife me, and over I went, on top of him. I had my pistol cocked, and I let him have it right in the chest. I must have fainted, because when I came to I was on my back and the moon was shining in my eyes. The man in gray was there alongside of me, supporting himself on one arm and looking at me.

"'I am dying,' he said in German.

"That didn't seem very interesting to me. So is everybody else, I thought; and I didn't answer. Presently he said it again, in English: 'I'm dying.'

"'Really?' said I.

"'Yes,' he answered.

"There was something impersonal in his tone, and he looked eery there in the moonlight, I can tell you, leaning on one arm and bleeding. Awfully good-looking chap. Built like a giant. He reminded me of a statue called the Dying Gaul, or something."

"Oh, yes; *I know that statue!*"

"Well, he looked like that — with all the fight going out of him. Suddenly he smiled at me.

"'Did you think you were playing your football when you came down on top of me that way, eh?'

"I say, I was a bit surprised. Football doesn't seem a very congenial subject for a dying man; but do you know, we sat there and talked for an hour at least about all kinds of sports and athletics. You should have seen the way he kept tossing the hair out of his eyes and saying, 'Fine, fine!' And then he'd boast, and tell me all about the things he'd done. I never saw a fellow built as he was. It seems that he was a champion in most everything. But after a while he seemed to get on to the fact that he was losing an awful lot of blood, and then he said again, 'Schade.' That was all. After two or three foolish tries I got up on my feet. The last I saw of him he was supporting himself on his arm, looking for all the world like that statue.

"They'd cleared off all the wounded, and only the dead were left. It was terribly still, and I could hear him choking, a long

way off, as I came back across the lines. The next day I happened to stumble across him. It was bright sunshine, and he was like marble, and the ground all about was sticky. He was staring up in the sun with his head thrown back and his eyes open, and the strangest look! Well, anyway, it made me think of a chap I saw once make a rippingly clever catch at ball, with the sun shining straight in his eyes, while the crowds went wild, and he didn't know what had happened for a minute. — His helmet was still there beside him, keeping guard, sort of like a dog, and I took it back with me. I don't know why."

Leonard paused; then he said, suddenly, averting his eyes like a child caught in a wrong act, "That talk we had was so queer — I mean it was as if — don't you know? — as if we were — well, sort of the same at heart. I mean, of course, if he hadn't been German. War is queer," he continued, lamely, raising his cropped head and looking off at the horizon. "Awfully queer," he murmured, watching a dark cloud steal across the water, tarnishing all its bright surface.

Presently he spoke again.

"So many men have been killed — Englishmen I mean; almost all the men I went to school with." He started to count as if by rote: "Don and Robert, and Fred Sands, and Steve, and Philip and Sandy." His voice was muffled in the sand. "Benjamin Robb and Cyril and Eustis, Rupert and Ted and Fat — good old Fat!"

Lying close to Marjorie on the sand, his mighty young body still hot from the joyous contact of the noonday sun, his eyes, full of an uncomplaining and uncomprehending agony, sought hers; and Marjorie looked dumbly back with a feeling of desolation growing within her as vast and dreary as the gray expanse lapping beside them, for it seemed to her that Leonard was groping, pleading — oh, so silently — for an explanation, an inspiration deeper than anything he had known before — a something immense that would make it all right, this gigantic twentieth-century work of killing; square it with the ideals and ideas that this most enlightened century had given him.

Marjorie strangled a fierce tide of feeling that welled up within her, and her eyes, bent on Leonard, were fierce because she loved him most and she had nothing, nothing to

give him. For he had to go back, oh, he had to go back to-morrow, and he hated it so — they all hated it — the best *of them*! How clearly she saw through the superb, pitiful bluff, that it was all sport, "wonderful"! Wonderful? She knew, but she would never dare let Leonard see that she knew.

And still Leonard counted, his head in his arms: "Arnold and Allen, and Rothwood, and Jim Douglas, and Jack and — Oh, Christ! I can't count them all!" His voice trailed away and was lost in the sand, and the big clouds, spreading out faster and faster, swept over them.

IV

They came up to London in a second-class compartment. Any one could have told they were on their honeymoon, for they wore perfectly new clothes, and on their knees between them they balanced a perfectly new tea-basket. They were making tea and sandwiches, and although it was all rather messy, it gave them the illusion of housekeeping. The lumbering local seemed to them to be racing, and the country sped by and vanished as quickly as the fleeting moments, for it was the afternoon of the fourth day. An old lady and gentleman, their only traveling companions, went tactfully to sleep. Leonard glanced warily at them, and turned his back on the flying landscape.

"Marjorie," he said, carefully peeling a hard-boiled egg; "Marjie."

"Yes, Len."

"Were you ever in love before this?"

Marjorie laughed. She was in the mood for laughter. She must be happy and light-hearted. Time enough later on to be serious.

"Sure," she replied gravely, mocking eyes on Leonard. "Weren't you?"

Leonard shook his head. "Just with actresses and *things*, when I was a kid. *Never*, really."

"I suppose," said Marjorie, pensively, "I ought to care if you've been bad or not, but I don't."

"But Marjie, darling," — Leonard brought her back and went straight to his point, — "were you ever really in love with that German chap you spoke of when I gave you the helmet?"

"He was my first love," said Marjorie, with wicked demureness. "I was fifteen and he was eighteen."

"You were just a flapper," said Leonard; "you couldn't be in love."

"A woman is never too young to adore some man," said Marjorie, sagely. "I was a miserable homesick wretch, spending the winter in a German boarding-school."

"A German school! What for?"

Marjorie, her small face drawn with fatigue, but her eyes vivid with excitement, regarded him pertly.

"In order to learn German — and culture."

Leonard gave a grunt.

"Yes, Len, dear, it was dreadful. You never could have stood it, you're so particular," Marjorie said, settling her head against Leonard's arm. "The girls only bathed once a year!"

"Dirty beasts!" muttered Leonard. "But what's that got to do with the point?"

"I'm preparing you for that by degrees. Len, dear, it was dreadful. No one spoke a word of English, and I couldn't speak a word of German, and it was such a long winter, and all the flowers and grass were dead in the garden, and at night a huge walnut tree used to rattle against my window and scare me; and they don't open their windows at night, and I nearly died of suffocation! They think in Germany that the night air is poisonous."

"They don't use it instead of gas. How about the man? Hurry up!"

He looked at his watch, but Marjorie chose to ignore him.

"We've got eleven hours," she said, with tragic contentment; "I'm coming to the man. The girls used to sit about indoors and embroider — oh, everlastingly! Hideous things. I was, oh, so restless! You know how you are at that age."

"I was playing football," said Leonard; "so ought the man to have been, instead of casting sheep's eyes at you."

"He had nice eyes," said Marjorie, pensively, "and lived next door, and," she added, as Leonard puffed stolidly at his pipe, "he was terribly good-looking."

"He was?" said Leonard, raising his eyebrows.

"So tall for his age, and his head always looked as if he were racing against the wind. He was always rumpling his hair as if in a sort of frenzy of energy, and he was awkward and graceful at the same time, like a big puppy who is going to be awfully strong. He was like a big, very young dog. So energetic, it was almost as if he were hungry."

"He's hungry along with the rest of 'em now, I hope," murmured Leonard.

"His name was Carl von Ehnheim. He lived in a very grand house next door," continued Marjorie, "and he used to come over and make formal calls on the pension Müller. He never looked at me, and whenever I spoke he looked down or out of the window, and that's how I knew he liked me."

"Most abominable case of puppy love," said Leonard.

"Oh, it was *so* puppy!" cried Marjorie; "but of course it made the winter pass less drearily."

"How so — '*of course*'?"

"Because he would always happen to come down his steps when *I* came down mine. *Or* when I was in the garden walking on the *frozen* walk with huge German overshoes on, he would draw aside the curtain of his house and stand there pretending not to see me until I bowed, and then he would smile and pretend he had just noticed me. And then, when Christmas came, all the girls went home, and Frau Müller and I were asked over to his house to spend the day. Did you ever spend a Christmas in Germany, Len, dear?"

"No, but I hope to some day."

"It's so nice, it's like Christmas in a book. He used to come into the garden after that, and we'd play together. And we read German lesson-books in the summer-house. And then, sometimes, for no reason at all, we would run around the summer-house until we were all out of breath, and had messed up all the paths. One day he had to go away. It was time for him to go into the army to be made an officer, and I didn't see

him for so long, and I forgot all about him, nearly. I would have if I hadn't been so lonely."

"Humph!" said Leonard; and Marjorie squeezed his fingers.

"Aren't you just a little bit jealous?" she pleaded.

"Jealous of a Hun?" answered Leonard, knocking the ashes from his pipe. "No." But he squeezed her hand somewhat viciously in return. "Not a bit. Stop wriggling! Not a bit. When did you see him again?"

"Not for a long time. One day I came home and on the hall table was a gold sword and a gold helmet with an eagle crest. Maybe I heard his voice in the parlor, maybe I didn't. Anyway, I put the helmet on my head and took the sword out of the scabbard. Oh, wasn't it shiny! I was admiring myself in the mirror when he came out. — Stop whistling, Leonard, or I won't go on.

"He was dressed all in blue and gold, and he wore a gray cape lined with red, and oh, he looked like a picture in a fairy book, I can tell you, and he just stood there and stared at me. And he said, in a very low voice, 'I didn't dare to kiss you under the mistle-

toe.' And I wanted to say something, but couldn't think of anything because he wouldn't take his eyes away; and then Frau Müller came out and said 'Good-bye' to him with great formality. And afterward she said it was very *unziemlich* to talk to a young officer alone in the hall, and, oh, I don't know — a whole lot of things I didn't listen to."

"And of course that only fanned your ardor and you continued to meet?" prompted Leonard.

He lighted a pipe and stuck it in the corner of his mouth, and never took his smiling eyes off Marjorie's thin little face, all animated in the dusk.

"Of course we met, but only on the avenue, when we girls were walking in a long line, dressed alike, two by two, guarded by dragons of teachers. But I'd lie awake every night and think of all kinds of things — his look, and the way his sword clanked against his boots. And twice I saw him at the opera, looking at me from one of the boxes filled with officers. You can't think how big I felt having him notice me — and you can't think how beautiful I thought he was. Little thrills ran up and down my

spine every time I looked at him. Is that the way you felt when you looked at your silly actresses?"

"Maybe," said Leonard, grinning with the corner of his mouth unoccupied by the pipe, and staring out into the shadowy darkness. "Was that all?"

They were drawing near to London.

"Mostly," answered Marjorie, fingering the buttons on Leonard's sleeve. "Last time I saw him it was in the garden on the same bench in the sun. He came over the fence, and he told me that his regiment had been ordered to Berlin the next day."

"You knew more German then?" asked Leonard.

"Yes, I suppose so; but I didn't need to understand. It was all in the sun, and the air was all warm from the cut clovers, and his eyes were, oh, so blue! And — I don't know. He took off his helmet and put it on my head, and he took his sword out of the scabbard and he put it in my hand, and he said, oh, all kinds of things in German that I couldn't understand very well."

"He was probably asking you how much your dowry was."

"Maybe, but his eyes didn't ask me that.

And that was all. I never saw him again, and I don't ever expect to."

"Should rather think not."

"Would you mind?"

"Certainly," said Leonard.

"They're horrible tyrants, English husbands," said Marjie, kissing his arm.

"Not so bad as German ones," he replied, putting his head down to hers.

The casements rattled. Into the little dark square of the compartment window peered a confusion of lights, the myriad eyes of a great city.

"Why, it's London!" cried Marjorie. "I'd lost all track of time. Hadn't you, Leonard?"

"No," he answered laconically, slamming down the lid of the tea-basket.

But Marjorie squeezed up against him and gave a little laugh. "Supposing it could be the same man, Leonard," she said.

"What man?" asked Leonard, snapping the lock.

"Why, the man of the Helmet — the Dying Gaul — and my man I've been telling you about."

Leonard looked at her, and for some reason his eyes flinched. "What difference would

that make? He was German," was all he said.

It was a sultry evening. Flowers were being sold in profusion on street corners. Hurdy-gurdies played war tunes in the gutter. The streets were filled with soldiers in khaki and florid civilians in their summer clothes. Suddenly she remembered a passage in the Bible that always seemed beautiful to her, but now it seemed to have been specially written for her: —

"Where thou goest, I will go, And where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, And thy God, my God."

She walked as close to Leonard as she dared: "Thy people shall be my people, And thy God, my God."

The passers-by smiled at her and turned and stared after. "Awfully hard on a girl," they thought, touched by the rapt look on the young face.

"Oh, Len," she whispered, pulling at his arm, "I love all these people; I love England."

He smiled indulgently.

"They're all right," he assented; "I don't mind strangers, but I hate the thought of all the relatives we've got to face when we

get back. There'll be Aunt Hortense and Uncle Charles. Mater'll have all the uncles and the cousins and the aunts in to bid me a tender farewell. Think of spending my last evening with you answering questions about how deep the mud is in the trenches, and what we get to eat, and what the names of all the officers in my mess are."

"And then they'll spend the rest of our precious time connecting them up to people of the same name in England," said Marjorie.

"Exactly," agreed Leonard. "Aren't grown-up relations beastly?"

"Horrible," said Marjorie, "but they've been awfully decent about letting me have you all of these four days."

To put off the evil moment of arrival they stopped at every shop-window and stared in, their faces pressed close to the glass.

All the way home, with eyes that neither saw nor cared where they were going, they talked to each other of their childhood. The most trivial incidents became magnified and significant when exchanged.

"That's just the way I used to feel, that's just the way I used to feel," they kept repeating, over and over again. The sweet, misty memories of their happy, happy lives,

came gliding back into consciousness. The thoughts and yearnings, the smells, the sights and sounds, all the serenity of the immaculate, long childhood days. Walking side by side in the reverent dimness, intensely conscious of each other, they had that mysterious sensation of having done *this before*, of living a second time. The world was transfigured; they were aware of measureless rapture brooding close about them in the twilight of which they were a part — a rapture, a sense of enchantment, that people are only conscious of as children or when they are in love or in dreams.

Finally, deliciously weary, and full of the languor of the summer night, they retraced their steps and took the two-penny tube.

They arrived home late. The family were at dinner.

"We've missed two courses," said Leonard gleefully; "the aunts must be raging."

"Shall I dress up?" said Marjorie.

"Good God!" answered Leonard, "I go to-morrow at five. Don't wear anything that will make them think we're going to sit round and converse with Aunt Hortense all the evening. I'm going up to say good-bye to the boy."

Marjorie found him there, stretched out on Herbert's little cot, completely covering the little mound under the pink coverlet.

"Don't you come near, Marjorie; I've got Leonard all to myself," cried Herbert, who, like all the others, was jealous of Marjorie, but did not scruple to show it.

"Ha-ha! Who's jealous now?" said Leonard, putting his head down on Herbert's. Marjorie lay down on the quilt at the foot of the bed. Her restless eyes watched a light from the driveway scurry across the bed and zig-zag over the faces of the two brothers. Like a sudden flame struck from a match it lit a metal object on the shelf over the bed. Ah, it looked grim and incongruous in that peaceful English nursery! Once it had been one among a golden sea of helmets, sweeping across a great plain like a river. The sun smote upon gleaming bayonets, passing with the eternal regularity of waves. Last autumn the world had shaken under the tread of the feet marching toward Paris.

The light clung to the glittering object, and then scudded away. Marjorie's eyes kept closing. Suddenly, and oh, so vividly, there came the memory of another garden; the cold, brooding stillness of the winter air,

and the sun sifting through the diamond windows of the summer-house, and shining on the dancing letters of the lesson-book and on his yellow hair. Then she heard Leonard's laughter and was back again in the present. *How* could he laugh like that! It was because he was so young. They were *all* so young!

"Good night, old man," said Leonard, pulling himself up from Herbert's bed; "don't forget me."

Three times Herbert called him back, and when Leonard returned and stood beside him, the little boy wriggled apologetically.

"Play with me," he said, plaintively.

"Play with you! I'll stand you on your head instead," said Leonard, and put his arm around Marjorie.

But Herbert continued to call to the emptiness.

Leonard and Marjorie paused on the landing, and he reached up and spread his hand over the face of the clock.

"Stop moving!" he said.

"You're just about three years old tonight," said Marjorie.

"I know — I know," he said. Suddenly, with an impulse and gesture of childlike and

terrible longing, he put both his arms about Marjorie. His face wore an expression that she could never forget. Looking up at him with wide, tearless eyes, she felt in that one uncontrolled moment that she knew him better than she ever would again. She felt wonderfully old, immeasurably older than Leonard, older than the whole world. With a love almost impersonal in its unconscious motherliness, she yearned with the mighty power of her woman's body and soul to protect this immature and inarticulate being who was faring forth to the peninsula of the "Dead English" to make his silent sacrifice. The great house seemed to be listening, hushed, to the sober ticking of the clock on the landing. Suddenly, with a preliminary shudder, its melodious voice rang out nine times. The two stole downstairs to the dining-room.

"Nine o'clock. We've missed three courses," whispered Leonard to Marjorie.

All through dinner he sulked. He could not forgive his Aunt Hortense for her very considerable bulk, which was situated between him and Marjorie. He squeezed his mother's hand under the table, till her rings cut into her flesh, and she had to smile; but

toward all the flattering advances of his aunt, and her effort to ascertain his opinion on every aspect of the war, he remained dumb with the maddening imperturbability of a sulky boy, who refuses to be "pumped."

After dinner he was claimed by his father and remained in the smoking-room, detained by a certain wistfulness in his father's manner.

"We've missed you these four days, old boy," his father said. "But I hardly expect you missed us. Can't we have a talk now?"

"Yes, sir; of course," Leonard answered. He felt suddenly contrite. He noticed for the first time in his life that his father looked old and little, almost wizened, and there was something deferential in his manner toward his big son that smote Leonard. It was as if he were saying, apologetically, "You're the bone and sinew of this country now. I admire you inordinately, my son. See, I defer to you; but do not treat me too much like a back number." It was apparent even in the way he handed Leonard the cigars.

Desperately conscious of the hands on the clock's face, which kept moving forward, Leonard sat and conversed on the recent drive in France, the Dardanelles campaign, home politics, held simply by the pathos of

his father's new manner. At every pause in the conversation he listened for Marjorie's voice in the drawing-room.

And Marjorie, in the drawing-room, was wondering desperately if he knew how the time was flying as he sat there quietly smoking and holding forth endlessly about transports and supplies and appropriations, and all the things which meant nothing to her. More wily than Leonard, she had escaped from Aunt Hortense, who, in true English fashion, had not appeared to be aware of her presence until well on toward the middle of the evening, after the men had left; then she turned to Marjorie suddenly, raising her lorgnette.

"Leonard's letters must have been very interesting to your friends in America."

"Oh, yes," stammered Marjorie; "but he never said very much about the war." She blushed.

"Ah," said the older woman; "I observed he was very silent on the subject. It's a code or custom among his set in the army, you may be sure of that. So many young officers' letters have been published," she continued, turning to Mrs. Leeds. "Lady Alice Fryzel was telling me the other day

that she was putting all her son's letters into book form."

Marjorie had an inward vision of Leonard's letters published in book form! She knew them by heart, written from the trenches in pencil on lined paper — "servant paper," Leonard called it. They came in open envelopes unstamped, except with the grim password "war zone." Long, tired letters; short, tired letters, corrected by the censor's red ink, and full of only "our own business," as Leonard said. Sometimes at the end there would be a postscript hastily inserted: "I was in my first real battle to-day. Can't say I enjoyed it." Or, "Ronald Lambert, who was my chum at Eton, never turned up to-night. I feel pretty sick about it." She remembered the postscript of his first letter from the front; not a word about the thunder of the distant cannonading or the long line of returning ambulances that greeted the incoming soldier. It gave the first realistic smack of the filthy business of war. "I've had my head shaved," Leonard wrote. "P.P.S. Caught One." Marjorie wondered how that would look to Aunt Hortense, published in book form.

"Aren't the men a long while?" said Mrs.

Leeds, for the fifth time; and Marjorie could endure it no longer. She could not bear to sit there and look at Mrs. Leeds's face. The fierce resignation of the mother's eyes seemed dumbly to accuse Marjorie, whose whole youth and passionate being protested: "I won't let her have Leonard this evening — I won't — I can't — it's his last! Why don't old people, like Aunt Hortense, fight wars, if they're so crazy about it?"

She crept unnoticed to the dark alcove, and slipped through the curtains of the French window. But the older woman's shrewd glance followed her; and all the while she was listening with apparent composure and concern to Hortense, she was saying to herself, with bitter impatience, —

"Fool! Why did she have to come this evening!" And then, "O Leonard, is it possible that little young thing can love you as I do!" And, "O Leonard — O Leonard!"

Marjorie, in the garden, skirted the shrubs and stole between the flower-beds to the library window. Vividly she could see Leonard, stretched out in a chair, his cigarette in one hand, gesticulating, talking.

"He's happy: he's forgotten all about

me," she thought; and swept by an absurd emotion of self-pity, she kissed her own arms in the darkness to comfort herself, till her eyes, which never left his face, saw him turn warily and desperately to the clock.

"Leonard," she whispered, pressing close to the glass.

Suddenly he saw her revealed in the pale halo of light cast by the window into the darkness. He looked at her for moments without moving. Then she saw him get up and say good night to his father, putting his hand awkwardly and self-consciously on his sleeve. Minutes passed, and she knew he had gone to say good night to his mother, and then she saw the light of his cigarette coming toward her across the lawn. She waited without moving for him to touch her. So many times she would feel him coming toward her in the moonlight, the outline of his dear form lost in the dusk, and when he put out his hand it would be only empty shadows.

"Marjorie, where are you?"

"Here, Len."

Some one came to the front door and called out, —

"Are you there, Leonard and Marjorie?

Lock the door when you come in, Leonard."

From the darkness they saw his mother's form silhouetted against the light inside. She started as if to come toward them, and then suddenly shut the door and left them alone together in the white night.

V

A THICK yellow fog lay over London; at five o'clock in the Victoria Station the dawn had not penetrated, and the great globes of electricity in the murky ceiling shed an uncertain light. Through the usual somber and preoccupied din of the early morning traffic, came the steady, rhythmic tread of marching feet. Lost in the smoke and fog, a band was playing "Rule Britannia."

Marjorie and Leonard were standing in the very centre of the vast dingy shed. Heavy-eyed, they looked about them with an unseeing, bewildered gaze, that kept reverting to each other. Marjorie had both her hands about one of Leonard's, and was holding it convulsively in the pocket of his great-coat. Many times she had pictured this last scene to herself, anticipating every detail. Even in these nightmares, she had always seen herself, with a sick heart, bearing up bravely for Leonard's sake, making it easier for him.

A hunchback, dodging under the elbows of the crowd, stared at her, and smiled

queerly and whispered to himself. Marjie shivered, then forgot him as a spasmodic gasp ran through the crowd; a sound suddenly seemed to envelop her like a wave, breaking, gathering itself, then breaking again — just two words: — "Good-bye — Good-bye — Good-bye."

She looked into Leonard's face, and saw that the moment had arrived; he was going. She was gripped with a sense of suffocation and panic. It was the same feeling that she had experienced as a child when she had gone in wading and had slipped into the water over her head. She clung to Leonard now just as she had clung to her rescuer then.

"Don't go! Don't go! I can't bear it! O Leonard!"

His hand, disengaging itself from her fingers, increased her panic. He put his arm about her.

"Marjie," he said, in a steady voice, which yet sounded unreal, not like his own, "I'm going. Good-bye. I love you with my whole soul; I always will. I shan't be able to hear from you, but I'll write you as often as I can. Don't worry if there are long intervals between letters. And, Marjie, don't believe too easily that I'm dead. If

you hear I'm missing, there is still a good chance; even if I'm on the lists, keep on hoping. I'm coming back. Good-bye." He kissed her, then paused, and put his dark head close to hers. "Marjie, if we should have one, — if it's a boy, — I want it brought up in England; and in case we should — promise me to take the best care of yourself — promise! That's right. Now stop trembling."

Marjorie nodded, with white lips, but continued to tremble. Leonard's face became equally white. He set his quivering mouth and turned away, but Marjorie clutched wildly at his sleeve.

"I'm coming with you as far as the boat, Leonard, just as far as the boat. See, those women are going. Oh, let me, Leonard!"

He hesitated, and in that empty moment a voice behind them said, "The average life of an officer in the Dardanelles is eleven days."

Leonard frowned; then glared at the hunchback, who was still peering at them.

"O Leonard, please, *please!*"

"You couldn't come back with them," he said painfully, averting his eyes from hers.

"Eleven days!" repeated an incredulous voice.

"I *will* come — I *will* come!" gasped Marjorie, trying to squeeze past Leonard through the gates.

He pushed her back peremptorily. His boyish face was pitiful in its determination.

"You go back," he said. He beckoned to a young officer who was standing in the crowd. "Stuart," he said, "will you see my wife to her carriage? She doesn't feel well. I'm going."

The soldier advanced. Marjorie glared at him with the eyes of an animal who sees her young taken away from her, and he drew back, his face full of pity. She threw one last despairing look at Leonard as he turned down the platform, and in that last glimpse of his strangely numb face she saw how he was suffering. She had a revulsion of feeling: a sense of desolate shame swept over her which, for a moment, surmounted her terror.

She had failed him! Behaved like a coward. Made it terrible for him at the very last. Oh, if he would only look at her again! The whole force of her despair went into that wish — and Leonard turned. A

few yards farther down the platform he swung suddenly about, and finding her face among the crowd, he tilted his chin and flashed his white smile at her while his eyes lighted and his lips framed the word "Smile."

The band, which had been gathering impetus for the last moment, pealed forth "Rule Britannia." Marjorie smiled, smiled as she never had before, and kissed her hand. He waved his cap. It was among a forest of caps. The whistle shrieked. The guards slammed the doors. Through the fog the train was moving.

"Rule, Britannia! Britannia rules the waves!
Britons never shall be slaves."

The crowds cheered. There came an acrid rush of smoke, which swallowed up the moving train with its cargo of khaki-clad boys. Above the cheering the hunchback, still dodging under the elbows of the crowd, was calling loudly,

"I came that they might have Life — Life — Life!"

The people stared down at the little sardonic face.

"Crazy?" they muttered.

The cripple shouted with laughter.

"Life — Life — Life!" he said.

When the smoke had cleared again, the tracks were empty, stretching away into blackness.

THE END